

Then, because as it turned out she had misplaced her  
car-keys,  
we had to go back to the school  
to search for them, and, finally, to call her husband  
to come pick her up.  
i was very drunk, very very very drunk,  
and i insisted on holding her hand  
in front of the indifferent janitors  
and on feeling her up  
while she was on the phone to her old man.  
"holding hands," she said;  
"jesus, i haven't held hands with anyone since high school."  
"what was so bad about high school?" i said.

back in the parking lot, i knew i should hightail  
it out of there, but, drunk as i was,  
and so taken with her old-young sensuality,  
i dallied to make protestations of a burgeoning affection.

"jesus christ," she said, "i haven't ..."  
"yeah," i said, "i know: you haven't had anything  
so gauche said to you since high school."

it was at that point that her husband's datsun  
(she was driving the lincoln)  
burst upon us in the nearly empty lot.  
she leapt from the v.w. and i tore ass  
(as we said in high school)  
out of there,  
checking in my rear-view mirror to make sure  
homicide was not about to be committed upon her  
or, worse yet, me,  
and recalling, from the prelapsarian recesses,  
a few of the things that were bad about high school.

an anti-semite for a saturday

i was getting a little work done for once on a saturday  
afternoon in the office when, sure enough, hartz,  
the guy from the office across the hall, had to  
appear in the doorway.

"awful quiet around here today," he said.

"yeah," i said, "it's a nice change."

"how can you work without a little background noise?"

"i don't know," i said, "but i can."

"quiet as a tomb," he said. "i have to have a little  
background noise."

"i don't," i said.

"i do," he said.

"look," i said, "you're probably a member of the younger generation. you probably grew up listening to little richard while you memorized your latin conjugations."

"no," he said, "i'm the same age you are."

"that's interesting," i said.

"warm in here," he said.

"is it?"

"sure is. can't you tell?"

"look, hartz," i said, "i'm basically an insensitive person."

"oh," he said, and wandered across the hall to his own office.

i was no sooner involved again in my writing than he was back in the doorway.

"i suppose you wonder what i'm doing over here on a saturday afternoon?"

"okay," i said. "i give up: what are you doing?"

"my wife has the flu and we had tickets to the drama department musical. i came over to sell them back. only took me a couple of minutes to unload them."

"i've never been to a play here," i said; "i keep meaning to go."

"how long have you been here?"

"nine years," i said.

he stood there looking at me for about thirty seconds. then he said, "like a tomb here. i don't know how you can work."

i'm going to murder him, i thought. i'm going to rise up from this swivel chair and strangle him with these bare ink-stained hands.

"awful warm," he said.

i started to get up from the chair. i'll cut up his  
dead body, i thought, and i'll feed it in little  
pieces to jacquith's piranha ...."

the phone rang. i swung around to answer it, and hartz  
went off down the corridor with a wave.

it was my girlfriend. "i was wondering," she said, "if  
you'd decided what you want me to fix for dinner."

"yes," i said. "a nice loin of new york academic jew."

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

Hunch

There's this girl  
with blond hair  
parted down the center  
of her head.  
Sometimes she wears  
it straight,  
sometimes back,  
less often circled  
in a bun or  
braided.  
She never wears bangs  
or eye makeup.

Charlene

We had lunch  
together. I told her  
about myself.  
I even told her  
how I had  
watched her,  
knew her habits,  
the different ways  
she wore her hair.

The years have gone  
beyond computation  
and where you are now  
I can't imagine.

but I will always  
remember the way  
you walked in pink  
shoes across the lake.

She was surprised.  
She smiled.  
She had a dimple  
on the right side  
of her mouth.  
None on the other.